

RIVIER NURSING DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES MILESTONE

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Beginning in fall 2005, Rivier began a yearlong celebration marking the 20th anniversary of nursing programs at the College. In October 2005, the Division of Nursing presented a dramatic one-woman performance by Kathy Kay Duckett, RN, BSN, PHN, designed to attract nursing alumni back to campus. Ms. Duckett, currently director of clinical programs for Partners Home Health Care in Boston, is also a professional actress with numerous stage credits. Nursing alumni and others were invited to her performance, “Florence Nightingale: A Medical Revolutionary,” during Homecoming.

A second program held in February 2006 in conjunction with the Rivier College Nursing Honor Society, featured **Dr. Michael Tramonte**, associate professor of education and a disaster mental health volunteer with the American Red Cross.

Tramonte, who has volunteered at many disasters, including 9/11, shared his views on some of the obstacles rescuers face when disaster strikes. Sylvia Polscino, a phlebotomist for the Red Cross also shared some of her experiences after Hurricane Katrina.

Rivier College graduated its first nursing class in 1985 when 19 students earned associate degrees from the Rivier-St. Joseph School of Nursing. The formal partnership between the College and the Hospital had received state approval in 1983 in response to the growing need for a two-year nursing degree program in Southern New Hampshire. An informal collaboration between the two institutions existed as far back as 1948, however, when hospital officials first approached college administrators about offering academic courses for their nursing students.

While the collaborative agreement with St. Joseph’s Hospital was amicably dissolved in 2002, the number of graduates in the associate program has continued to grow, with 106 earning A.S. degrees in 2005. Through the years, the College has not only added students, but also has expanded its nursing programs to include a bachelor’s and master’s degree—with programs at all levels accredited for a full 8-year term by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.

An R.N. to B.S. degree was introduced and has grown from two graduates in 1990 to a current enrollment of 200-plus students. Rivier launched graduate nursing classes in 1993 and in 1999 expanded its offerings to include a master’s degree in nursing education.

With a well-publicized critical shortage of nurses nationwide, Nursing Division Chair **Paula Williams** says in recent years Rivier’s programs have attracted an increasing number of mid-life career changers and ‘single moms’ looking to take advantage of plentiful job opportunities and adequate wages.

“Rivier’s nursing programs are particularly attractive because we offer a great deal of flexibility. We have multiple entry and exit points within our programs,” says Williams.

There have been many occasions for celebration over the past 20 years—Rivier nurse practitioner students have enjoyed a 100 percent pass rate on national certification exams and recent accreditation reviews have been ‘glowing’—but Williams says she is proudest “of our students’ successes on the job.” Walk into virtually any hospital or clinical setting in the region today, she says, and you’re likely to meet a Rivier graduate. “They’re everywhere, and many are in nursing leadership roles.” Now that’s something to celebrate. A third 20th anniversary event is being planned for fall 2006. Watch *Rivier Today* and the College website for details. ■

* **LUCIE BRYAR**, a freelance writer, earned a B.A. in English Communications from Rivier College in 1976. She has more than 20 years experience in newswriting, marketing, and public relations, including nearly 14 years as a staff writer for Rivier College. In the past, she produced the faculty/staff newsletter, *Campus Forum*. Bryar also wrote marketing materials for admissions, the college website, and feature and news articles for the magazine, *Rivier Today*.